Appointment of Chief of Defence Staff

1319. SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposal of appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff is still alive in the Government; and

(b) the current status of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The Government has not taken a decision on the subject as yet.

(b) While the Government has already established Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) Headquarters, which is headed by the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC), the Government is of the opinion that a discussion on the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff requires wider consultation with political parties.

Condition of Roads Constructed by BRO

1320. SHRI URKHAO GWRA BRAHMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that many roads constructed by the BRO are already in bad shape particularly on Indo-Bhutan Border in Assam;

(b) whether it is also a fact that BRO is failing to execute all projects in time; and

(c) if so, Government's initiative in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is developing and maintaining 32 roads in Assam which are funded from the budgets of Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways and Department of Development of North Eastern Regions (DONER). Only General Staff Roads and National Highways [where entrusted by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)] are

being developed and maintained by BRO. As far as the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) works are concerned DONER sponsors these roads and bulk of the work is confined to construction of permanent bridges.

The overall condition of roads under the charge of BRO in Assam is satisfactory. However, due to unusually heavy monsoons this year, National Highway-53 and certain BTC roads have been damaged. Cases have been forwarded to concerned agencies for providing funds for restoration of roads in the region.

The BRO generally completes all works on time. Certain BTC road projects were, however, delayed due to a substantial change in the scope of work during execution.

Occupation of agricultural land by army along Indo-Pak Border

1321. SHRI T.S. BAJWA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that large chunk of agricultural land all along Indo-Pak Border have been occupied by Army for operational reasons during various wars;

(b) if so, the area of land under the possession of Army at present;

(c) whether there is any proposal for handing over such land to their owners; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) An area of 2390.27 acreas of land is still in possession of the Army at present.

(c) and (d) Out of 2390.27 acres, an area of 164.460 acres of land is under mines and can be handed over after de-mining.